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Top Beaufort Co. Sheriff's investigator shares controversial posts on Facebook page

By Jake Shore · islandpacket.com · 4 min

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A top officer in the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office who oversees sensitive internal investigations has recently shared a host of inflammatory political posts on his personal Facebook account, which until Tuesday was public. A sheriff's spokesman said the posts did not violate the department's social media policy.

Lt. Brian Baird runs most of the internal investigations into allegations of deputy misconduct at the Sheriff's Office and has held that post since 2011. He said the posts are personal and have no connection to his job.

One of Baird's public Facebook posts on June 20 shows an image of Barack Obama and Michelle Obama with Baird's message: "They sure did stoke the flames of racism and did



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A post shared by Beaufort County Sheriff's Office Lt. Brian Baird on June 20, where he insinuated former President Barack Obama is a "Muslim," a known conspiracy theory.

The portrayal of Obama as a Muslim is inaccurate and has been repeatedly debunked.

After The Island Packet began inquiring about Baird's public posts on Tuesday, his page was deactivated.

Baird said he was unaware that his Facebook page was public, so he took it down until he could reconfigure his privacy settings.

Among other posts Baird has shared this summer:

- An image of a newspaper column shared on June 23: "If we dislike a black person, we're racist and if a black dislikes whites, it's their 1st Amendment right," the post said.
- An image on June 11 of a woman who was blamed for vandalizing a WWII memorial in New York state. "Pass her along," Baird wrote when he shared it. The post, which calls the woman "a worthless pile of human flesh," is a viral social media hoax, according to Snopes.

A post on Beaufort County Sheriff's Office Lt. Brian Baird's public Facebook page on June 11. The image was proven by Snopes to be a viral social media hoax



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Facebook marked three of Baird's political posts in June as having partly untrue information or being completely false, as indicated by independent fact-checkers.

Internal investigations

Baird said his 40 years in law enforcement highlights that he can separate personal beliefs from his investigations.

"I don't post any affiliation to the Sheriff's Office to Facebook," he said in an interview. "I post things about my retired military status and personal political opinions."

Lt. Brian Baird

"Everything I do is open to public records. I do not and never have posted personal opinions into a report," said Baird. "I put into a report whatever the facts turn out to be. My personal posts on my personal Facebook are just that."

Baird handles sensitive allegations against Sheriff deputies and compiles detailed accounts of his findings. He authored



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concluding that a white deputy did not racially profile during the January traffic stop of Bluffton Town Council member Bridgette Frazier's husband, who is Black.

Baird wrote that he told Frazier, "when it comes to Beaufort County Sheriff's Office I believe [racial profiling] doesn't exist."

Baird also handled the investigation into an excessive force complaint of a Hilton Head man in April, clearing the deputy of wrongdoing.

Baird shared a public post on June 18 about people who resist police officers:

A public post on Beaufort County Sheriff's Office Lt. Brian Baird's Facebook page on June 18.

"For those of you who have never been in a foot chase with an armed suspect this is how the suspect gets shot in the back," the post said. "Police officers have every right to defend themselves period. Don't resist and don't run."

"So true," wrote Baird when he shared the post.



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Law enforcement on social media

Baird's posts were found to be within Sheriff's Office rules, according to Beaufort County Sheriff's Office Maj. Bob Bromage.

And since there has been no complaint against him, there won't be any investigation, he said.

"If the Sheriff had any question about Lt. Baird's objectivity, ethics, or integrity, he would not be conducting those investigations," Bromage said.

The Sheriff's Office policy on social media recommends that deputies not broadcast that they are employed as law enforcement officers but allows them to post freely so long as it doesn't hurt the department's reputation.

"Agency personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not . . . negatively affect the public perception of the Sheriff's Office," according to the policy document obtained by Freedom of Information request.

Controversial social media posts from local public safety officials have been under scrutiny in recent years.



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after its spokesperson made profanity-laden Facebook posts, as reported by the Beaufort Gazette.

- A Jasper County firefighter is no longer employed by the department after an anti-white supremacy group raised questions in December about posts attacking refugees and accused him of being a Nazi sympathizer.
- A white Jasper County sheriff deputy resigned a year ago after he used a racial slur in an Instagram post.

Social media rules from the Sheriff's Office warn that off-duty posts from officers are not protected speech under the First Amendment and "may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Sheriff's Office."



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